

## Prayer Meeting

### UNTO THE PURE ALL THINGS ARE PURE.

Week Beginning September 26. Titus 1: 15, 16.

In evangelizing the island of Crete (now Candia) Paul and Titus encountered exceptional difficulties. The people had no moral character as a ground-work upon which to build. It was hard to appeal to conscientious conviction or to their self-respect, for they appear to have had little of either. The apostle was, therefore, after leaving the island, the work having been committed to the care of Titus, very solicitous for its welfare. He accordingly wrote this epistle giving directions about organizing churches, refuting and resisting false teachers, and purifying the moral atmosphere from its many pollutions.

Progress had evidently been made in winning converts to the true faith, so that instruction had already been given to ordain elders in every city. But great care was needed in the selection of these elders, or bishops, as they are called indiscriminately in this context, and minute specifications are made lest men should be selected for the high office who were incapable, either because of a lack of native ability, or of sufficient training, or of moral integrity.

The qualities required for the eldership having been specified, the apostles proceed to warn against dangerous and otherwise objectionable men. His arraignment of them is pointed and severe, and he does not hesitate to require that "their mouths must be stopped" because they subverted whole houses by false teaching for filthy lucre's sake. He then makes a sweeping indictment of the whole Cretan population, as in verse twelve, and to sustain his charge he quotes Epimenides, a poet of reputation, and a native of Crete, and affirms the statement of this "prophet" is true. He describes them as a population of liars, for which they had long been notorious; as evil beasts either because of the beastliness of their tastes and habits, or their being like ferocious animals, a menace to society; and as indolent gluttons, spending their time in eating and loafing.

The most objectionable element of this low social order consisted of Jews, "they of the circumcision." So Titus is next instructed to warn the people against "Jewish fables and commandments of men that turn from the truth." Paul gives great prominence in his writings to warnings against and refutations of error. In our day there is a great tendency to wink at error and exhibit a "charity" which, while ostensibly "broad," is really superficial and spurious.

When the writer reaches this point in discussing the evils of Cretan society he is constrained to declare a great principle in the words: "Unto the pure all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving, is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled." Their works deny their profession, inasmuch as they are "abominable and disobedient and to every good work reprobate."

That the churches in Crete might be sound in the faith, Titus was directed to instruct them not to "give heed to Jewish fables," or human traditions and commandments of men that turn from the truth." These related principally to distinctions between clean and unclean meats (such as some churches make now at Lent), divers washings and other fancied purifications. Paul said that what they needed was pure hearts. Meats and ordinances and sanctuaries and worshippers were all holy, to the pure in heart; and to the corrupt, ceremonial purifications availed nothing. What God wants is purity of heart and life, and not the subterfuge of ceremonial cleansing. When the motive is pure and the conscience is clear and the understanding is enlightened the worship is accepted, and no amount of ceremonial or will worship of any kind will render us acceptable in the sight of God to whom we must always account.

We once heard a very complacent man justify himself in reading coarse novels by quoting the text, "Unto the pure, all things are pure." What a perversion—a corrupt mind pharisaically justifying its grossness by such a quotation! Our answer to every such evasion is "Unto them that are defiled and unbelieving, is nothing pure."

## Young People's Societies

### LIFE LESSONS FROM EPHESIANS.

Topic for Sunday, October 3.—Life Lessons for me from the Book of Ephesians. Ephesians 4:1-6, 25-43.

#### DAILY READINGS.

Monday: The eternal purpose. Ephesians 1: 1-14, 2: 10.

Tuesday: My great desire. Ephesians 1: 15-23.

Wednesday: My spiritual resurrection. Ephesians 2: 1-10.

Thursday: The old man and the new. Ephesians 4: 17-25.

Friday: Walking in the light. Ephesians 5: 1-21.

Saturday: Social relationship. Ephesians 5: 22, 6: 9.

The Church at Ephesus enjoyed peculiar advantages. Paul found it and spent a longer time with it, in giving it a start, than with any other.

The conditions there were such as to give him peculiar interest in its people and in the church. The cost to him of his work there was large.

In writing to the people there, when he heard of the need to guard them against doctrinal defection, his whole heart as well as mind were in the letter.

There are no personal salutations in the Epistle. It is peculiar among Paul's letters in that respect. It is due, the best scholars agree, to the fact that it was put into form to make it suitable elsewhere.

The "encyclical" nature of the Epistle, that is, that it was intended to be used as a "circular letter," enhanced its general interest, but in no way lessens the local interest attaching to the Ephesians themselves who were to read it and pass it on.

Great principles are dealt with in this Epistle. Any one who is afraid of such expressions as "chosen in him before the foundation of the world," "having predestinated us," "riches of his grace," "the mystery of his will," "God hath before ordained" would do well to avoid it!

Great principles make great men and great women. The trouble with many of us is that we are afraid of the very things that make men great. Little souls will always stay little if they abide and revel in little things. The lifting power of great things is not with them.

But with the great principles of this Epistle are enjoined great duties. They are inseparable. Faith and practice belong together. Believing and doing are united. Large ideas make large action. The most splendid deeds are never apart from the most splendid character.

The principles laid down are, God's election of grace, the sovereignty of his will, his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his own will, the sealing of the Spirit, the resurrection, death in trespasses and sins, quickening by the Spirit, salvation by grace alone, the atonement, union with Christ, "the fellowship of the mystery" of Christ.

The duties laid down are lowliness, meekness, long-suffering, forbearance, unity, faithful use of gifts, truthfulness, self-control, purity of heart, tongue and life, kindness, tender-heartedness, a forgiving spirit, walking in love, temperance, devotion, thankfulness, submission, faithfulness in the relations of life, watchfulness, prayer.

A passage worth memorizing is, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will."

Another splendid memory passage is, "Take unto you the whole armour of God. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."